Alumni Spotlight: Michael Sanderson

07/12/2018

What year did you graduate from USU and what was your major/research focus?

I graduated with my bachelors in 1998 and my master’s degree in 2003. I was interested in health and aging and had the opportunity to work with Professor Krannich in Sociology and Professor’s Derek Mason and Terry Peak in the Social Work program to develop and administer a survey of senior social and service needs. I used the data from this survey to write my thesis which focused on the role of informal social networks and the likelihood of service use by senior citizens in Utah.

I wonder if you could tell me a little more about your position as at City Research Scientist at the NYC Department of Health. How do you end up there, and how do you spend your days?

I began working at the NYC Department of Health in 2007. Before that I worked for several years for the Utah State Health Department. As a City Research Scientist, I manage the development and implementation of a large annual surveillance survey that provides health estimates at the city, borough, and neighborhood levels (call the NYC Community Health Survey). I work with programs to develop and test new survey items, conduct methodological work, manage the vendor who does the data collection, and consult with agency programs on smaller research projects.

I’ve always had an interest in how populations change (fertility, mortality, migration) and the social forces affecting those change.

Was there a particular mentor or professor who inspired you when you were a student here? Can you talk a little about that?

There were several professors who made a lasting impression on me. Eddy Berry first got me really interested in social statistics and I still have the text book from undergraduate “intro to stats” and refer to it at least semi-regularly. Richard Krannich, Derek Mason, and Terry Peak were all great mentors who showed a lot of patience and taught me a lot about survey design.